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DEPT FOR AF/S R. MARBURG, WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [VE](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: CHAVEZ TO VISIT SOUTH AFRICA SEPTEMBER 5-6

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez will visit Cape Town, South Africa September 5-6, according to DFA Deputy Director Annelize Schroeder (protect). South Africa will roll out the red carpet for Chavez, treating the trip as a full-fledged State Visit. Schroeder told PolOff July 24 that Chavez will meet with President Thabo Mbeki, ForMin Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, and will address Parliament. Mbeki will host a state dinner for Chavez. The South African and Venezuelan governments are also discussing adding a business component to the trip, which may include inauguration of a Venezuela-South Africa business forum.

¶2. (C) Chavez wants to visit Robben Island and broadcast live to the people of Venezuela from President Mandela's former jail cell, Schroeder said. The South African Government (SAG) has not yet consented to this request, pointing to logistical and diplomatic questions about live broadcasts from Robben Island.

¶3. (C) Schroeder commented that the Government of Venezuela refuses to provide information about the makeup of Chavez's delegation, citing "security concerns." This is becoming frustrating for the South African planners, and the SAG will eventually give the Venezuelans a drop dead date for providing basic logistical information about the delegation.

¶4. (C) COMMENT. We understand that Chavez has been trying to schedule a visit to South Africa for more than two years, and the South Africans felt they finally had to say yes. South African officials have mixed feelings about Chavez, admiring his "pro-South" (and anti-U.S.) rhetoric, while acknowledging the problems with his economic and regional policies. Mbeki is reportedly close to Brazilian President Lula and Chilean President Bachelet, regarding them -- not Chavez -- as his natural allies in Latin America. END COMMENT.  
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